STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Seeking Peace in a World of Imprisoned Beauty

Kathy Kelly has spent her life trying to open our eyes to the beauty of people targeted by U.S. bombs in war zones, and the sacred lives desecrated by poverty.

by Terry Messman

Kathy Kelly with Shoba, a young child who had just been rescued by her uncle from a deadly fire in an Afghan refugee camp.

While serving nine months in federal prison after her arrest for an anti-nuclear protest where she planted corn on a nuclear missile silo in Missouri, peace activist Kathy Kelly had a vivid awakening that she was living in "a world of imprisoned beauty."

In prison, Kelly met women who were captives in this world of imprisoned beauty, women who could just as easily have been her sisters-in-law or her next-door neighbors. To this day, she cites the courage of the women she met in prison as a guiding light in her work for peace and justice.

Kelly was stunned to realize that there was no mercy for women who were cut off from their families for many years, often for very minor economic crimes. Yet, it was life-changing for her to witness at first hand the courage demonstrated by these women in facing years of imprisonment.

It was nothing less than a revelation of the beauty of the human spirit — a world of beauty buried in the prison system. The women were separated from their children, branded with a heavy social stigma, yet they found a way to carry on despite these crushing burdens. In an interview with *Street Spirit,* Kelly said, "So you have this world of imprisoned beauty and it is almost as though it's erased from the mindset of the rest of the country."

This jailhouse epiphany opened her eyes to the countless precious and irreplaceable lives that our society has caged behind prison walls, cast off into refugee camps, banished in homeless shelters, or left to die on remote battlefields.

It changes everything, this revelation that all around us, in the poorest neighborhoods nearby, in the almost forgotten jail cells of our cities, and in the far reaches of the world's refugee camps and war zones, beauty has been put on trial, imprisoned, erased and extinguished.

Kathy Kelly is one of the most respected peace activists in the nation. She has lived in solidarity with people in war zones, and returned home to launch protests on their behalf in the halls of Congress. Kelly and her friends also organized 70 delegations to deliver medical supplies to civilians in Iraq, in violation of U.S. economic sanctions.

She has spent her life trying to open the eyes of a nation to see the beauty of innocent people targeted by U.S. bombs in war zones, and the sacred lives desecrated by poverty. She has been arrested dozens of times for acts of resistance to the high-ranking officials and corporate executives responsible for war crimes and economic deprivation — the pillars of society who are almost never jailed for their crimes against humanity.

Kelly said, "The main people that threaten us are in the corporation offices and in the well-appointed salons at parties, and they *really* threaten us. They make weapons. They make alcohol, firearms and tobacco, and arms for the military. They steal from us, and they rob us. And who goes to jail? A woman who can't get an economic stake in her community unless she agrees to be the lookout for a two-bit drug transaction."

See **Seeking Peace in a World** *page 6*

Albany Officials Demolish Homeless Encampment

Dozens of lovingly built homes were smashed to pieces by bulldozers, and turned into rubble.

by Lydia Gans

It has now been almost a year since the Albany City Council decided to turn the Albany Bulb Waterfront Park over to the East Bay Regional Park District. The Albany Bulb, a former landfill, has been a source of controversy for many years. State parks do not permit overnight camping, off-leash dogs and works of art, all of which continue to happen in creative abundance on the Bulb.

Homeless people started to camp at the Albany Landfill more than 15 years ago. Ever since, they have been planting trees, clearing out debris, cutting trails, building shelters for themselves from salvaged materials, and establishing a community.

They all have little or no income and there are no homeless shelters, and practically no affordable or low income housing, and no medical or social services in Albany. Living on the Albany Bulb turns out to be a viable alternative.

Some want to be close to nature and to have access to the outdoors, while for others it is important to be part of a community. Some have medical or mental health issues and can't find a housing situation that meets their needs. Several live with service or comfort animals and are forbidden to bring their companion animals with them into the shelters.

"I feel free here, I'm happy here," a camper said recently. "I have been healthier since I came here six years ago," another person asserted.

They are artists, musicians, carpenters and machinists. They build houses and

See **Albany Demolishes Homeless** *page 5*

Albany officials sent in bulldozers and haulers to destroy the camp. Lydia Gans photo

Global Day Against Militarism: Move the Money Home!

by Stephen McNeil

On Monday April 14, more than 33 local groups distributed more than 14,000 "Move the Money (from military to human needs)" brochures to BART riders throughout the Bay Area. Calling for riders to tweet or call their members of Congress to shift spending from war and nuclear weapons to human needs, the actions were part of the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS).

Each spring, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute releases global military spending figures (in which the U.S. spends by far the most). While simply educating the public about our obscene military spending won't bring change, the action created both a sense of community and movement. Those not caught up in the morning rush to get to work took the fliers. Many times, community activists who distributed fliers at the end of the workday heard from BART passengers that they had already received the flier and read it.

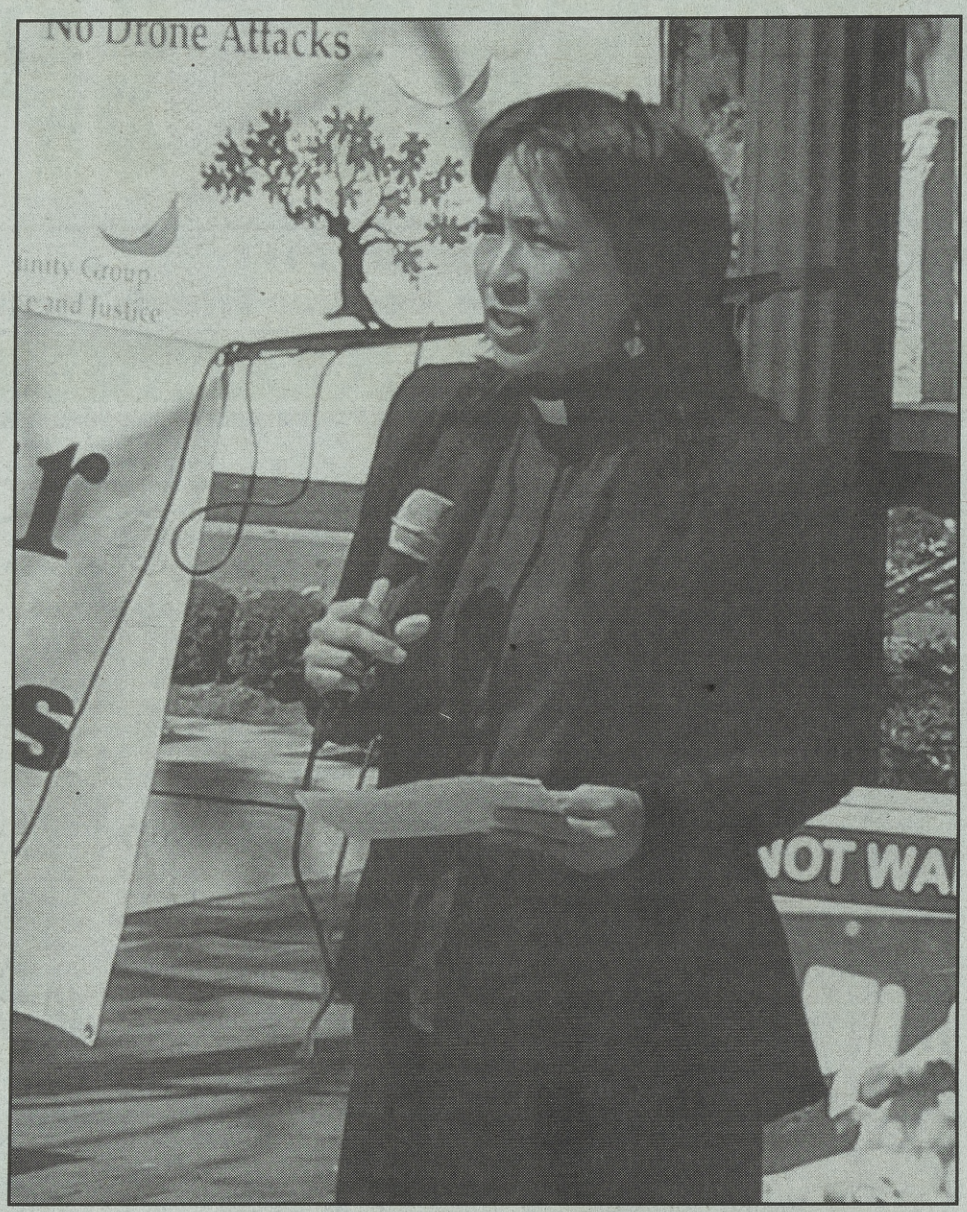
Last year, only 15 BART stops were covered. This year, early organizing had over 100 activists covering 30 BART stations and three neighborhood areas. Bay Area New Priorities guided the cooperative actions. Requested actions in the brochure included a call to members of Congress to cut military spending, a twitter share, and a QR code to the New Priorities Campaign principles. We included one panel on the proposed increase in nuclear weapons spending.

A noon press conference was enlivened with Chalkupy's creation of a greedy Pentagon symbol grabbing all the money. Mayors Jean Quan of Oakland, Gayle McLaughlin of Richmond, and the City Council of San Pablo issued *Proclamations in support of the Global* Day of Action on Military Spending.

Women for Genuine Security's Reverend Deborah Lee said, "It's time for the war money to come home. Not be shifted to increased militarization in the Asia-Pacific. There are tremendous needs for that money to be spent on jobs, housing and education."

"More than 17,000 nuclear weapons, most held by the U.S. and Russia, continue to pose an intolerable threat to humanity," declared Jackie Cabasso, executive director of Oakland's Western States Legal Foundation and North American Coordinator of Mayors for Peace. "Our government should be working in good faith to eliminate all nuclear arms, not stealing more of our tax dollars to modernize these weapons of mass destruction."

Meanwhile, the Obama administration's FY 2015 budget request seeks a 7 percent increase for nuclear weapons research and production programs. With that, its FY 2015 budget request for maintenance and modernization of nuclear bombs and warheads in constant dollars exceeds the amount spent in 1985 for comparable work at the height of President Reagan's surge in nuclear weapons spending, which was also the highest point of Cold War spending.



Rev. Debbie Lee calls for "the war money to come home." John Lindsay-Poland photo

Wounds and Wounds

by Claire J. Baker

Too many street sleepers,
doubly wounded, earned
the nation's Purple Heart,
even the Bronze Star.
Now they don't have a home,
a job or a car.

Pavement for a pillow
is as hard as it gets
for these so-called
"residuals of war,"
our vets — cast offs
from Walter Reed
doubled over in need.

Time to Declare A New War on Poverty

Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan speaks out on the Global Day of Action Against Military Spending

"I join in the bipartisan voices to ask President Obama and Congress to meet the urgent local needs of our communities. Several months ago, on the 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty, I led Alameda County to declare a New War on Poverty as persistent poverty continues to plague close to 200,000 residents of Alameda County.

"In fact, California today, when you take into account the cost of living index, has the highest rate of poverty in the nation and the highest rate of poverty among seniors. 29% of our children are poor and there are 15 neighborhoods with child poverty rates above 50%.

"Income inequality has never been worse with the richest 10% of Americans controlling 75% of the wealth. The only weapons of war we need to expand are weapons in the War on Poverty! Congress must reinvest in human lives and not on increased militarization!

Over the past 6 years, over $15 billion has been cut from County safety net services. While 1 in 6 families now depend on food banks for their primary source of family food, the federal government has cut from the SNAP Program. Budget cuts have resulted in the elimination of over 100,000 childcare slots statewide leaving many women with no choice but to stay at home and endure economic loss. Statewide, over one million jobs were lost during the recession.

"It is time to place priorities using our precious tax dollars on getting people back to work, funding early care and education and providing food security to Alameda County residents. $10 billion of federal money is enough to create 1.5 million high quality subsidized child care slots. $100 billion would create 1.2 million living wage jobs. The amount needed to enhance these programs pales in comparison to the $682 billion currently spent in the U.S. on the military."

Longest War Winds Down, But Pentagon Funding Rises

by Mary Zerkel

Children of my daughter's generation have spent their entire lifetime in a country at war. She is just about to turn 12. She was born into an era of war that she and her peers rarely hear about, but the longest war in U.S. history is quietly affecting their lives and future.

Our entire country has been frozen in a brutal cycle of human and economic loss, with more than 6,000 U.S. soldiers killed in both Iraq and Afghanistan and trillions of dollars spent on endless war.

But spring may finally be emerging. March 2014 marked the first month in over 12 years that there were zero U.S. casualties among troops engaging in conflict — which should certainly be looked upon as a milestone. We have been drawing down our troops from Afghanistan and looking toward most of the troops coming home by year's end.

It seems we could now begin to move forward into a new era focused on a truer version of security, one that addresses what we need to survive and even prosper: investments in health, education, and other social programs that have been starved during this cold season of war spending. Sadly, that seems to be far off on the horizon.

The president's FY2015 budget proposal has taxpayers spending $549 billion for military programs, a 5 percent increase over last year — that's 57 percent of our federal discretionary dollars.

And that's not all. You might be shocked that this investment of over half a trillion dollars in military spending doesn't include war activities — and that war spending is also going up while the war is winding down. War spending is part of a separate budget known as the "Overseas Contingency Operations" (OCO) account. This budget is not subject to spending caps put in place by the sequestration process and has become a convenient slush fund for the Pentagon.

Our entire country has been frozen in a brutal cycle of human and economic loss, with more than 6,000 U.S. soldiers killed in both Iraq and Afghanistan and trillions of dollars spent on endless war.

In fact, according to the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, in the FY2014 budget, the Pentagon moved $20 billion in operations and maintenance costs from its base budget to the war budget. On top of that, Congress added another $9.6 billion of base spending on salaries and benefits to the OCO. This allows the Department of Defense to avoid cutting wasteful pet projects such as the failed F-35, because they have transferred essential base costs to this uncapped account. While this budget gimmickry goes on, urgent needs at home go unaddressed, and the debt the next generation must pay for wars waged "off budget" mounts.

By the end of this year, most of our troops will be home from Afghanistan after more than a decade of war. So why is war funding going up? Our country must switch its priorities to move the money from waging wars to addressing pressing human needs.

This tax day, April 15, a diverse group of organizations mobilized around the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS)/US Tax Day, and asked Congress to get rid of the Pentagon slush fund in the OCO. With the United States spending more on the military than the next 13 biggest spenders worldwide combined, worried handwringing from the Pentagon and Congress about cuts seems disingenuous, to say the least.

On tax day, I made visits on Capitol Hill with my daughter and 66 other young people from around the country who spoke out about the disinvestment that their generation has been experiencing over the last 13 years of war. They want and desperately need sustainable schools, up-to-date educational materials, after-school programs, food stamps for those in need, affordable college tuition, community centers and affordable housing — not more wasteful Pentagon spending.

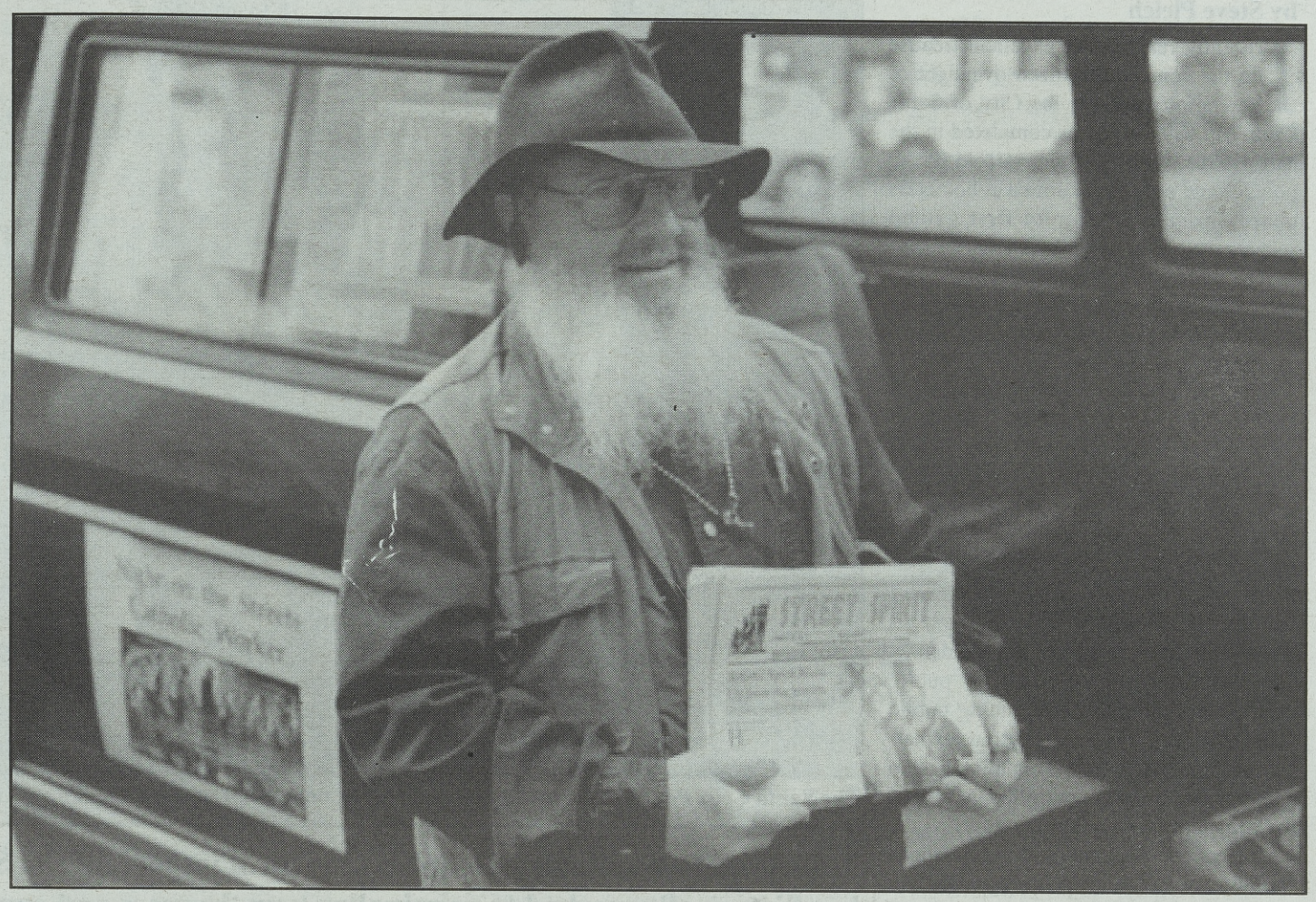
Join us. Tell Congress to end the Pentagon slush fund within the OCO account. This tax day, let's turn the heat up and melt this slush fund away so we can help this generation and their communities bloom, grow and thrive.

Mary Zerkel is co-coordinator of the Wage Peace program of the AFSC. Copyright, Truthout.org. Reprinted with permission.

Good Samaritan at Work on the Streets of Berkeley

"People watching us can see what their fellow citizens are doing and think about what they could do to help feed and clothe those in need."

— JC Orton, Catholic Worker



JC Orton delivers mail, soup, clothing, rain gear, sleeping bags and *Street Spirit* newspapers out of his van. Matt Werner photo

by Matt Werner

Every Sunday morning for the last 17 years, Zyg Deutschman has gone over to JC Orton's house at 6 a.m. to help prepare breakfast for homeless people in Berkeley. One morning, about a decade ago, JC opened his door to find Zyg slumped over on his doorstep.

JC first thought Zyg was drunk but then saw that Zyg's face was gray. He was having a major heart attack. JC called 911 and continued preparing the meal after the paramedics arrived and took Zyg to the hospital.

Years later, JC recalls how he was able to finish getting the meal out on time that morning. He filled his van with oatmeal, grits, sweet rolls and fruit; arrived at People's Park in time to feed the 80 or so people who'd gathered for breakfast; then drove to Civic Center Park (across from Berkeley's City Hall), where he fed about 80 more people. This was all in a day's work for JC, who heads up the Night on the Streets Catholic Worker.

JC lives below the poverty line. He suffers from diabetes. Skin cancer has left scars below his left eye and left forearm. His wife is bipolar and recovering from drug addiction. Despite these odds, he and the Catholic Worker serve breakfast in the parks every Sunday morning and soup three nights a week. Aided by a few college students and recent grads, JC distributes hundreds of sleeping bags and runs the storm shelter on cold and rainy nights.

JC is a skilled negotiator who tracks price fluctuations of staples and dry goods on spreadsheets, and recently asked the military surplus store on San Pablo Avenue, "In 2013, you sold me 250 ponchos for $5.50 per unit. Could you make that happen again this year?" The deal went through, and the military-grade ponchos have kept Berkeley's homeless dry for another winter.

FEED MY SHEEP

JC Orton looks like a street-smart Santa. He wears Bill-Gates-1980s-style glasses, a black button-down shirt, gray vest, black jeans and worn, black tennis shoes. His trademark black Stetson hat frames his white beard.

At age 65, he owns few possessions. His only extravagances are the iMac and iPhone that he uses to keep track of sleeping bags, copies of Street Spirit, and the mail he distributes to homeless people. For those on the street without an address, he set up a PO Box, and they can pick up their mail at free meals around Berkeley.

He takes pictures of the hundreds of people he delivers mail to, and these photos sometimes serve as a person's only recent identification record. JC holds memorial services for the homeless, enlarging the deceased's photo and posting it in the person's favorite spot.

JC Orton says he will continue serving those in need until he physically can't do it anymore. Conversation with him jumps from details like who is doing the laundry that day for the shelter, to stories from the lives of those who inspire him, including Martin Luther King Jr., Henry David Thoreau, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and Catholic Worker founders Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day.

JC peppers his conversation with phrases like, "We see the face of Christ in everyone in the soup line."

Night on the Streets Catholic Worker is an all-volunteer effort that JC coordinates without pay. He recruited Zyg Deutschman and fellow volunteer David Hahn at a Bible study group in 1997. The group was discussing the passage from *John* 21:15-19, where Jesus tells Peter, "Feed my sheep."

JC chimed in that they could continue talking about the passage or come out with him one evening and actually feed hungry people on the streets of Berkeley. Hahn and Zyg joined him.

JC relates to people with mental-health problems easily. As a teen growing up in Los Angeles in the 1960s, he was a patient in the mental health system in Southern California. He says, "We're all wingnuts, a bit loopy for renouncing wealth and most material possessions."

Add to that categorization the fact that many of his clients are aging radicals wary of organized religion, and it makes sense why JC wore a hardware-store wingnut strung on a shower stopper chain in lieu of a cross for many years.

David Hahn says of JC's efforts, "It is an understatement to say that Night on the Streets has made a difference in Berkeley. JC has actually created services for the homeless when they did not exist."

JC started out distributing food and necessities, then expanded his services to include visiting the sick, helping people find housing, and even helping with income taxes. JC now speaks at local schools to get students involved in issues of poverty and homelessness.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the winter months, JC drives his 1991 Volkswagen van with over 300,000 miles on it around Berkeley, handing out soup and hot chocolate along Shattuck and Telegraph avenues. The van smells of old chocolate milk and has the aroma of old bread, oatmeal and grits from years of hauling the Sunday morning breakfast.

A Night on the Streets Catholic Worker banner affixed to the side features a drawing of Jesus standing in a soup line. On the rear window there's a sign saying "Providing award-winning service since 1997" with a listing of all of the meals and services available to homeless people throughout Berkeley.

When JC drives the van down Shattuck, it's as if he's Berkeley's other mayor, a celebrity among the homeless. Folks lying on the sidewalk stand up, wave and smile at him. One man shouts, "Hey JC, Where's my (*Street Spirit*) papers?" With his window down, JC shouts back to the man across the street, "Meet me at the Quarter Meal."

When asked why he does his service publicly on the streets of Berkeley, JC said: "People watching can see what their fellow citizens are doing, and perhaps think about what they could do to help feed and clothe those in need. We've called our Catholic Worker effort 'Night on the Streets' because the streets is where we do our service. Hopefully someone will be inspired seeing us out there to also help those in need in our community."

Brando Gutierrez, who drives the van to deliver soup Monday nights, said, "Sometimes that bowl of soup is all these folks get that night. A gentleman may be cold and on the ground, but this shows him that he's human, that he's cared for. It makes a world of a difference."

LIKE COSTCO'S BACK ROOM

Out of his humble duplex off University Avenue in West Berkeley, JC operates a food pantry in his garage, equipped with industrial fridges, racks of donated canned goods, sacks of dehydrated potatoes. Next to the dried goods, JC stores volumes of the Catholic Encyclopedia.

Gutierrez, a volunteer for over six years, describes JC's house as being "like Costco's back room. He's meticulously organized. He can tell you four years ago who served corn at the MLK dinner."

JC's attention to detail and felicity with numbers has kept him as the representative payee for a dozen East Bay residents, mostly homeless or institutionalized people in Berkeley. At one point the City of Berkeley paid him to manage the finances of people who city social workers found elusive due to mental illness, drug issues and jail terms.

JC said that, after the city ran out of funds to pay him, he kept at it. "The need didn't go away," he says.

With JC's organizational skills and thoroughness, if he were applying for jobs as a bookkeeper, commodities trader, or corporate administrator, he'd be in high demand. He holds "office hours" at Peet's Coffee at Shattuck Avenue and Kittredge Street from 7:30-9 a.m. six days a week. People stop by to ask him for assistance applying for Social Security, Medi-Cal or Section 8 housing.

JC uses his coffeehouse "office" as one of several mail distribution points, and if he sees that someone is receiving a W-2, he'll ask if they're doing taxes to get their withholding back. (Sometimes a tax refund is enough to afford housing for a month or two.) Using TurboTax on his home computer, he fills out 1040EZs,

See **Good Samaritan** *page 12*

Street Spirit

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Street Spirit welcomes submissions of articles, artwork, poems and photos.
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Street Spirit Vendor Team

The *Street Spirit* vendor program is managed by J.C. Orton. More than 150 homeless vendors sell *Street Spirit* in Berkeley and Oakland. The vendor program provides many jobs to homeless people in bad economic times, and is a positive alternative to panhandling.

Please buy Street Spirit only from badged vendors. If you have questions about the vendor program, call J.C. Orton on his cell phone at (510) 684-1892. Email: noscw@sbcglobal.net

Civilian Police Review Could Help Homeless People

by Steve Pleich

I recently read a very excellent treatise on the concept of citizen oversight of law enforcement in the City of Santa Cruz. But that work was completed in the early 1990s, before the generalized public policies and ordinances aimed at homeless people in our community first gained acceptance and became local law.

The police review board that ultimately grew out of that concept was hamstrung by the parochial politics that persist to this day and was disbanded amid frustration with the process and a lack of substantive impact. As I read the article, I wondered aloud what relationship that model of civilian oversight had to present-day Santa Cruz, to our common interest in the protection of individual rights, including those of people experiencing homelessness, and to the pursuit of public safety. I found some interesting answers.

In my time as a Santa Cruz resident, I have seen a growing concern for public safety, coupled with an expanding public mandate for law enforcement to use whatever means and methods they think best to curb the perceived uncontrolled growth of the homeless community.

Indeed, one does not need to be a social scientist to understand that the dynamic balance between the presence in our community of homeless individuals and the duty to maintain public safety has shifted dramatically over the past few years.

I have watched our elected officials support a marked and noteworthy increase in the number of sworn officers serving in the police department, while seeming little concerned about the chilling effect that heightened police presence inevitably brings on those considered to be less desirable members of the community, i.e., *the homeless people.*

But it is not the expansion of the police department or the overarching presence of law enforcement in our city that concerns me most — or for that matter, even the effect such presence unarguably has upon the homeless. Rather, it is the almost complete lack of citizen participation in the development of these policies and the complete absence of civilian oversight of this ever-expanding aspect of our community that prompts these observations.

And no segment of our community is more profoundly affected by this absence of oversight than the homeless community.

It is often observed that police officer training is almost entirely devoted to intelligence gathering, weapons proficiency and police procedure. They are only tangentially trained in nonviolent conflict resolution and community relations, and particularly their interactions with homeless persons.

And here I will say that this is not entirely their fault. The officer on the street is only as good as the training he or she receives. And clearly, they are not receiving the kind of training and input that would create not only an enlightened police force with a clear understanding of the challenges of homelessness, but a more efficient one as well.

Every incoming police administration in recent times has called for a policy of positive engagement to bridge the perceived divide between law enforcement and the homeless community. In point of fact, if this chasm were not real and existing, there would be no need to call attention to it as a matter of departmental policy.

But what the police department has failed to recognize is that the homeless community itself knows a few things about public safety and the protection of individual rights.

It knows that law enforcement alone cannot make the community safe. It knows that true public safety can only be developed and sustained in an atmosphere of trust, accountability and inclusiveness. It knows that individual liberties are a bedrock value that must be honored and preserved. And it knows that community engagement is the foundation of wise and forward-thinking public safety policy.

So the question becomes: If we accept these statements as true, how are we to *actualize them in ways that best benefit* our community, including citizens who are experiencing homelessness?

I respectfully suggest the creation of a nine-member Civilian Police Review Board composed of representatives of neighborhood groups, homeless and behavioral health advocates, and social service providers who would be charged with review of police policies and procedures and tasked with oversight of our police department. Understand that when I say "oversight" I do not mean control.

Such a board would be committed to ensuring that Santa Cruz has a police department that acts with integrity and administers justice fairly and evenhandedly for all of its residents. However, to insure the independence of such a body, the board would consult directly with the police department and would pass along advisory opinions to the Santa Cruz City Council for informational purposes only.

That is the only way to depoliticize the process while creating a clear line of accountability between the community and the police department. This is particularly important in light of the fact that our City Council has historically worked to criminalize homelessness in Santa Cruz and continues to enact ordinances that substantially abridge even the most basic human rights of our homeless residents.

What powers would this new, modern Citizens Police Review Board have? If, as we say, the board is to be composed of citizen representatives, it cannot, for example, be restricted to consideration of already completed internal police investigations into allegations of police misconduct toward homeless people.

A truly reformist board must be given the power to conduct parallel investigations to supplement and inform those conducted by Internal Affairs. Although ultimate decisions would continue to be the province of the department and its chain of command, a civilian review board with independent investigative authority would have the power to make recommendations to the chief of police concerning disposition and discipline.

This model would create a direct and substantive review process that would provide a voice to a homeless community that is often ignored and marginalized *when their basic freedoms are abridged by* police procedure.

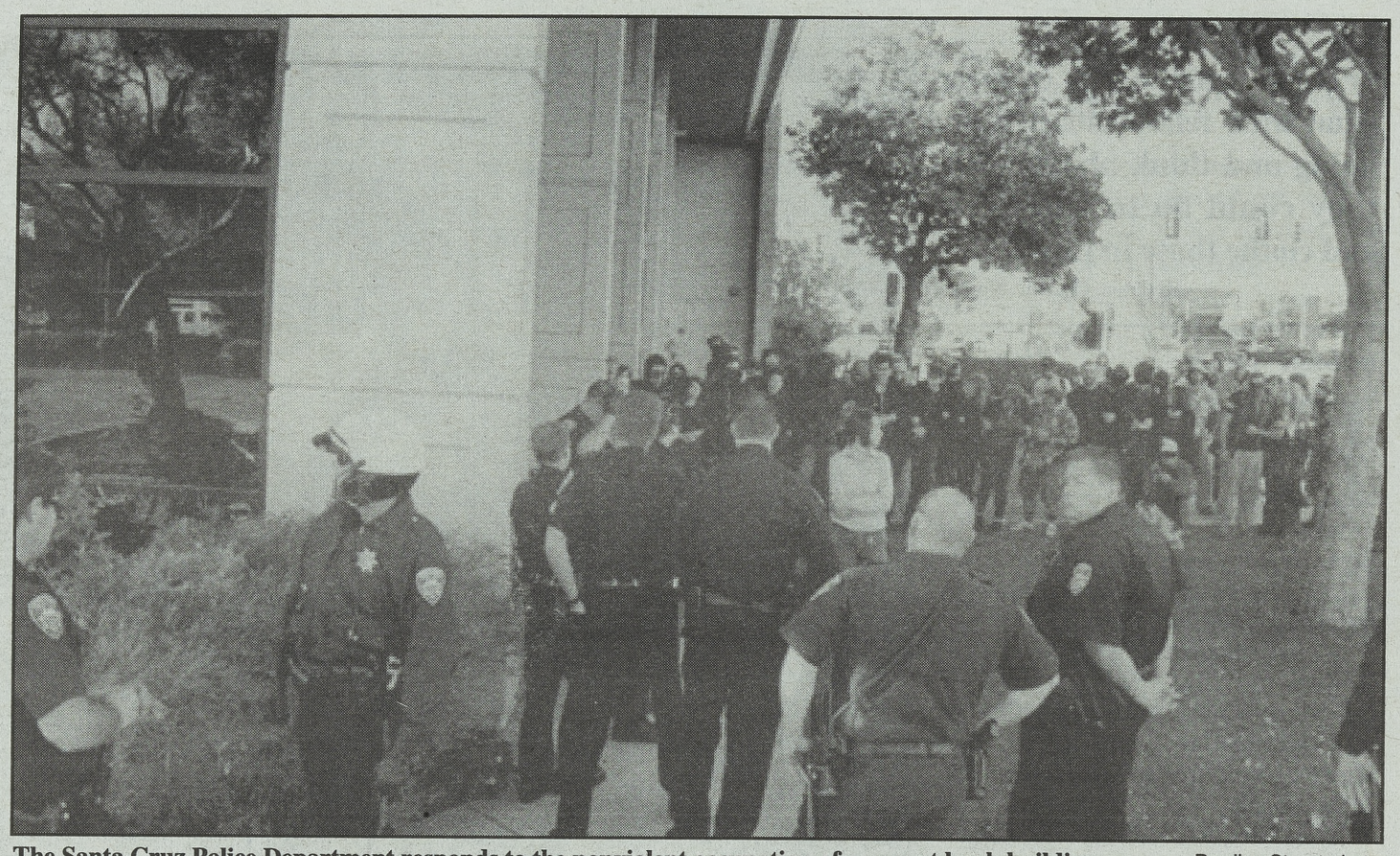
On issues of operational policy and commitment of resources, any such board would need to have direct input to achieve any degree of real effectiveness. The obvious benefit of this input would be that resource allocation and policing priorities would more accurately reflect the community's concerns, providing a more inclusive base of opinion about how best to make safe our city while giving equal weight to the preservation of civil liberties.

For example, if the board felt that public safety would best be served by spending more money on gang suppression and less on petty theft investigations, resources could be allocated accordingly. If the board recommended more money be devoted to the investigation of sexual assaults and less to enforcement of the so-called "quality of life" ordinances such as the camping ban that exclusively impact the homeless community, then that policy could drive fundamental reallocation of resources.

These are matters upon which reasonable minds will surely differ and will ultimately be the product of a long public input and review process. But it is a conversation we must have if a truly effective oversight process is ever to become a functional part of protecting the civil liberties of persons experiencing homelessness both individually and collectively.

Finally, I will say this. I have always found some considerable fault with the idea that "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Rather, I believe that we must let go of the excesses and omissions of the past and make our own history, taking from it the lessons we learn along the way. This is the only sure way to chart a future that ensures the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all our citizens, the homeless and the housed alike.

Steve Pleich directs the Homeless Persons Legal Assistance Project in Santa Cruz.



The Santa Cruz Police Department responds to the nonviolent occupation of a vacant bank building. Bradley Stuart photo

A Civilian Police Review Board is of critical importance in Santa Cruz. The City Council has historically worked to criminalize homelessness and continues to enact ordinances that substantially abridge even the most basic human rights of our homeless residents.

A Good Man

by George Wynn

Homelessness only makes
sense when you live it
he tells me down
around the Cal Train Station

It's his 80th
and we share a
sunny afternoon beer
and before he departs
he folds his hands
in prayer, "Thank
you God. I'm
still alive," and waves,
"Thank you pal."

Urban Spring

by George Wynn

After the church meal
in the Fillmore
he tells me he often feels
like he's in a silent movie.

When people see him
coming down the street
carrying duffel bags
and so weary-eyed
almost on the brink
of falling asleep on his feet
they never make a
sound, they only frown
as if they're sore at him
for being around.

"My self esteem
comes when I dream:
Mama's face beams with
a delicious smile
then a big hug
It's my respite from
the real world."

He rises to leave.
"Happy Spring," I say.

"Spring," he laughs
"Spring is only more
urban madness."

"I'm on my way."
He flips out his
cardboard sign
highlighted in black:
MT. SHASTA
and walks out the door.

My Dream Is for All Animals to Have Rights

Service dogs are trusted companions for disabled children. Lydia Gans photo

by Rafael Pepper-Clarke age 9, Rosa Parks School, Berkeley

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." That's why I'm writing about my own dream. My dream is for animals to have rights and for us to respect them.

First of all, understand that without animals we'd all die of starvation. They are the top of the food chain but below us. They help us because they supply us with food and keep the world balanced.

Bees pollinate flowers and give us honey. Actually, we take it from them. The bees don't give it to us, we steal it! Like we stole land from the Native Americans.

Ants also get rid of extras which we don't realize and we kill them. So do dung beetles, which we think are gross because they are rolling a ball of poop around and we kill them even though they're getting rid of extras. Killing them is dehumanizing/deanimalizing.

Also, animals get rid of pests like weeds, flies, locusts, etc, to help us stay alive. Animals also can warn us of storms like tornados, earthquakes and hurricanes. They're also adorable.

But animals don't have a voice. That's why we can hurt, kill and torture animals and nobody stops us.

What would you do if you were an animal? Put yourself in their paws, hooves, or fins. I believe that animals have the same emotions as humans, like fear, pain, sadness and joy.

Animal rights groups believe "that every creature with a will to live has a right to live free from pain and suffering." This is why we should help animals and give them a voice and I hope you agree after reading this. All we need to do is start.

Animals are awesome.

"Sì se puede!" "Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed," said César Chávez.

"On Our Way Home"

Photo Documentary by Homeless Elders

May 2 — May 16

Uptown Body and Fender, 401 26th Street, Oakland

"A Way to Survive." (Oakland man with shopping cart.) Keith Arivnwine photo

by Susan Werner

St. Mary's Center presents "On Our Way Home," a photo documentary by homeless and formerly homeless elders. These elders used disposable cameras to bring to public awareness conditions that face homeless people.

Taryn Evans, the artist who conceived and funded the project, said, "By providing each artist with a medium to tell his/her own story, I expect and hope that the forgotten issue of Oakland's homeless senior population will be looked at with renewed hope. I'd like to get people talking about what we can do to improve their lives."

These artists offer understanding and ideas about what we can do to end a growing epidemic. The exhibit opens for First Friday, May 2, 2014, from 6 to 9 p.m., at Uptown Body and Fender, 401 26th Street, Oakland, near Telegraph. The exhibit remains open on weekdays until May 16, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

All the photographers involved in this documentary found their way to the Winter Shelter program of St. Mary's Center. For many, the tragedy of homelessness became an opportunity for some kind of magic to unfold in their lives.

Charles Ford explained, "When I was homeless, I often felt very bad and without hope. I did not see a way out. I needed some help. At St. Mary's, I began to feel better about myself and about building a more fulfilling, productive life."

Keith Arivnwine reported that, after squatting in vacant homes for several years, he felt "a desire for change from within. I started making changes in my life. At St. Mary's, I was around positive people who also wanted to do something different with their lives."

Pedro del Norte said, "At St. Mary's Center, I felt a sense of belonging. We shared experiences and collaborated in overcoming adversity."

A growing number of seniors in Oakland are caught in the housing crisis. The Census Report tells us there are more seniors living in poverty in Oakland than any other urban area in the state.

As the title suggests, this exhibit is also about hope. "On Our Way Home," celebrates the wisdom of elders as they offer a personal look at life on the street and what we can do to help create change.

For information contact Susan Werner 510-923-9600 x 231, www.stmaryscenter.org

Albany Demolishes Homeless Camp

from page 1

plant gardens. And, as can be seen from the homes they built for themselves out of construction debris, scrap materials and items retrieved from dumpsters, they are superb scavengers.

Albany officials announced that the first step in carrying out the transfer to the East Bay Regional Park District would be to evict all the campers and dismantle the encampment. Not surprisingly, there were loud protests, both from the campers and from activist supporters in the community.

City officials then brought in Operation Dignity to set up trailers to provide temporary shelter for six months and Berkeley Food and Housing Project to help the campers find housing. After that, the campers would be on their own. The city would do nothing more to help them.

The whole thing was a crashing failure. Nobody stayed in the trailers, and practically nobody got housing. The campers were not moving, because there was nowhere for them to go.

Instead, they filed a civil rights lawsuit asking for a restraining order to prevent Albany from evicting the campers until the city found adequate shelter for them.

Meanwhile, the police put increasing pressure on them. A 10 p.m. curfew was imposed and citations were issued with threats of court actions. A camper reported being harassed in the middle of the night by a police officer. A policeman shot and killed another camper's dog.

The campers' appeals failed and ultimately they negotiated a settlement to take effect Friday, April 25. In the settlement, 30 people were offered $3000 each to cover relocation expenses. A total of 28 accepted, and two people refused as a matter of principle.

In accepting the money, they had to agree to stay away from the entire area — all of Albany city property west of the freeway — for the next 12 months. They cannot even come for a visit with friends.

City spokesperson Nicole Almaguer said that "the settlement agreement allows the City to continue assisting people, connecting them with human services and housing through the city's service provider, Berkeley Food and Housing Project."

It need hardly be said that $3000 can't go very far for people with little or no income, since rents and living costs are so high throughout the Bay Area.

A few people finally found housing, but it is not clear how many campers were left out of the settlement and how many remain in the camp at the Albany Bulb. Everyone was required to move out by Friday, April 25, when the bulldozers came and began to demolish the houses and dump trucks hauled away whatever the people may have left behind.

But some people did not leave. They had nowhere to turn, and no home in sight. They had only what they could carry with them and no place to go. One camper felt terrible having to keep his cat confined to its carrier, another worried about how he would take care of his dog.

Being evicted from one's home can be traumatic for anyone — even more so if they have built it themselves and now have to see it destroyed.

The house that Sharon and Luis built under a protecting tree with an upstairs bedroom that looks out through the branches on a spectacular view of the Bay — gone. Stephanie's house that she spent more than a year building, and the carefully laid out garden guarded by pink flamingos — demolished. Jimbow's free lending library and dozens more homes — smashed to pieces by the bulldozers, and all turned into rubble.

The Albany Bulb has evoked strong feelings. What is to happen on that little piece of land since it was created is controversial. There are those who feel that nobody has the right to occupy public lands, and others who had an unpleasant or frightening encounter with a camper's dog, or simply disapprove of the campers' lifestyle. On the other hand, many people appreciate the eco-consciousness of the campers, their reuse of discarded materials to construct their homes. Hikers and dog walkers have become friends with some of the campers.

Over the past few years, the campers have been gaining increasing support from people and organizations in the community. A weekly pizza was brought to the encampment from Solano Community Church, and sandwiches and juice were delivered by Food Not Bombs. Volunteers providing for medical needs or a ride to apply for social services are evidence of widening community support.

Several filmmakers have made documentaries about the Albany Bulb. A website, SHARE THE BULB, has been created to tell the story and solicit support.

Albany has been trying to turn the Bulb over to the state for many years and it appears to still be a long way from happening. The campers may have been officially evicted, but the dog walkers are resisting the prospect of losing a favorite place of recreation. And the art lovers declare that they are determined to protect the art works that mean so much to so many people.

Seeking Peace in a World of Imprisoned Beauty

from page 1

Reclaiming The Radical History Of Nonviolence

Two of the most meaningful aspects of Kathy Kelly's lifelong experiments with nonviolence are the *passionate commitment* that gives rise to her solidarity with victims of war and poverty, and the *diverse dimensions* of her resistance. Passionate and multidimensional.

The daringly radical and imaginative history of nonviolence has been forgotten to such an extent that our present-day concept of civil disobedience often consists of the staging of a strangely passive and bloodless drama. Activists politely submit to arrest, and then the powers that be carry on business — and warfare — as usual.

Yet, the history of nonviolence is filled with unforgettable images of rebels and agitators who passionately resisted injustice as though their lives were at stake. If we are to build a movement that fights for a better world — a world where beauty is no longer imprisoned — it is imperative to reclaim this legacy of truly radical resistance.

Our heritage of resistance was passed down to us through the breathtakingly brave acts of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, Alice Paul and her sister suffragists staging hunger strikes in jail, and the women of Greenham Common peace camp in their never-say-die protests of U.S. cruise missiles in England.

Our guiding lights are housing activists who defied the police and put evicted families back into their homes, anti-nuclear activists who sailed their boats directly into the path of nuclear submarines, and the Alabama schoolchildren who found the courage to march for freedom and refused to turn back, even when confronted with attack dogs and police clubs.

Our reckless blueprint for action was drawn up by the Catonsville 9 who burned hundreds of draft records during the Vietnam War and Plowshares activists who hammered nuclear warheads.

And our course ahead into a more humane future was navigated by Kathy Kelly and Voices in the Wilderness when they delivered medical supplies to the children of Iraq, in fearless defiance of U.S. economic sanctions.

Full Spectrum of Nonviolence

At its heart, nonviolence arises from a deep reverence for life that leads us to confront the masters of war and the architects of poverty, and also provide food, housing and healthcare to the poor.

That is one of the most striking things about Kelly's lifelong journey into nonviolence. Along with passionate acts of anti-war protest that were often costly on a personal level, she has constantly tried to reach out personally to assist the victims of war and poverty. That has often meant living in war zones with people in Iraq and Afghanistan targeted by U.S. bombs.

Her activism reveals the full, multidimensional spectrum of nonviolence, ranging from war-tax refusal, to planting corn in nuclear missile silos, to protesting drone surveillance, to delivering medical supplies to Iraq, to working with Afghan Peace Volunteers in an effort to help poor people survive economically.

Yet, even in light of all of her outwardly more dramatic acts of resistance, one of Kathy Kelly's nonviolent vigils that matters the most to me was her decision to become a full-time caregiver for her wheelchair-bound father for several years until his death in 2000. This quiet vigil reminds us that compassion on a personal level is at the very heart of nonviolence.

In August 1988, Kelly was arrested and imprisoned for climbing the fence around a nuclear missile silo and planting corn as part of the Missouri Peace Planting to demonstrate how the earth should rightfully be used to serve life. It speaks volumes about her long-lasting commitment to peace that this year, fully 25 years after the Missouri Peace Planting, Kelly was the keynote speaker at the anti-nuclear vigil at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory on Good Friday, April 18, 2014.

Kathy Kelly (*center, at top*) lives with members of the Afghan Peace Volunteers during her frequent stays in Afghanistan.

"I've been carrying with me the sense of horror of remembering all the little lives snuffed out in Iraq, those children that we witnessed dying in hospital beds because of economic sanctions against Iraq. We've lost all of their lives." — Kathy Kelly, speaking at Livermore Laboratory

At the Gates of Livermore

At the gates of the holocaust laboratory at Livermore, Kelly urged on the faithful activists, such as Carolyn Scarr and the Ecumenical Peace Institute, who have kept the Livermore protests alive for over 30 years. Kelly spoke passionately about the urgent need to "stop the menacing, horrible message that the nuclear weapons spread all over the world: If you do not subordinate yourselves to serve U.S. national interests, we are prepared to eliminate you, to slaughter you."

In 2003, Kelly was arrested for trespassing at Fort Benning in Georgia at an army training center originally called the School of the Americas. She spent three months in prison for protesting a "school" where the U.S. taught military officials how to utilize torture, assassinations and death-squad massacres of unarmed civilians to prop up right-wing Latin American dictatorships.

Kelly reminded her fellow protesters at Livermore Laboratory this year that Father Roy Bourgeois had once been jailed after climbing a tree at Fort Benning and using a loudspeaker to broadcast Archbishop Oscar Romero's impassioned plea for the soldiers of El Salvador to lay down their arms and stop slaughtering their own people.

Then Kelly delivered the exact same message to the weapons designers at Livermore who are designing the U.S. arsenal of nuclear warheads. She said, "Invoking the words of Oscar Romero, in the name of God, I order you, I beg you: stop the slaughter, stop the repression!"

Her Good Friday address was indelibly colored by the years she spent in solidarity with people targeted by war in the Middle East. She said, "I've been carrying with me the sense of horror of remembering all the little lives snuffed out in Iraq, those children that we witnessed dying in hospital beds because of economic sanctions against Iraq. They should have been teenagers now. We've lost all of their lives."

Kathy Kelly (*third from left*) and her fellow protesters re-enact the stations of the cross at Livermore Laboratory on Good Friday. Photo by Judith W. Sandoval

Keeping the Faith

There was a sense that she was keeping faith with the children she learned to care about in Afghanistan and Iraq. Keeping faith with the anti-nuclear activists she was arrested with 25 years ago at a missile silo in the American heartland. Keeping faith with Father Roy Bourgeois who was arrested at Fort Benning for keeping faith with Archbishop Romero, assassinated while saying Mass after asking the soldiers to lay down their arms.

Keeping Romero's words alive, Kathy Kelly asked the weapons designers at Livermore to lay down their nuclear arms. Her presentation was, above all, *passionate*, as befits an observance of the Passion Play that is Good Friday. Nonviolence means *passionate resistance* because too many innocent lives have already been lost, and too much blood has been shed.

The Abolition of War

In inviting people to step across the line into civil disobedience at Livermore, Kelly expressed a hope that may sound utopian in the present moment, but may someday turn out to be essential to survival itself.

"We want to abolish war," she said, "and we'll hang onto that claim for dear life. Yes, we want to abolish war. We want to stop the wars!"

Where does one even begin on such a far-off journey as the abolition of warfare? For 40 activists who were arrested at Good Friday this year, only the next step was certain — a single step across a white line.

"So we gather together," Kelly said, "shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, believing in nonviolence, believing that, yes, we shall overcome. And so we gather together, ready to say that we will not let inconvenience get in the way of acting in accord with the deep, profound desire to end war. Let us step across the line. Let us get arrested today. Let us say together, 'We shall overcome.'"

The *Street Spirit* Interview with Kathy Kelly

"We crucify the poorest and neediest among us on the cross of military spending. We have a responsibility to claim our right not to kill."

Interview by Terry Messman

Street Spirit: *You just returned from Afghanistan last month where you were living with the Afghan Peace Volunteers. Many people, even in activist circles, are no longer focusing on that war-torn nation. Why does Afghanistan remain such a critical focus of your work?*

Kathy Kelly: I have a friend, Milan Rai, who had coordinated Voices in the Wilderness in the U.K. and is now the editor of *Peace News*. Mil once said, "One of the ways to stop the next war is to continue to tell the truth about *this* war."

So how do we tell the truth about our wars? I think if the U.S. public understood the choices that are being made in their name — and if the public understood those choices outside the filter of the forces that are marketing those wars — eventually there might be a hope of non-cooperation with the wars.

So Afghanistan is still very, very important in terms of the choices confronting the people of the United States. But also, just on the purely ethical matter of not turning away from people who are dying, we owe reparations to the people of Afghanistan for the suffering that has been caused.

Spirit: *You wrote recently that thousands of Afghan children have no home and are forced to live on the streets or in squalid refugee camps, and that poverty and hunger are widespread. For those who have not been to Afghanistan, can you give us a picture of the conditions faced by civilians after all these years of war?*

Kelly: On a recent trip during the winter when it's very cold in Kabul, a youngster came in the door. The child's name was Safar and he was shaking so convulsively, I put my arm around him, just trying to calm him down. When he turned towards me, I could see that he had a welt across his cheek. He was a shoeshine boy. He was wearing plastic slippers with no socks. He had no earmuffs. He had thin pants, and was completely inadequately dressed for this weather.

Because he's a shoeshine boy, he has to thaw his hands out because it's so cold. So he had gone to a barbecue spot and started warming his hands over the fire. I think, understandably, the owner of the shop who was making the kabob thought he was trying to steal something. But, unacceptably, the man hit him over the face with a hot skewer and that's what had caused this bright-red welt.

Safar is one of 60,000 children who are relied upon to support their families. The families do not want to send their kids out into the streets to shine shoes or sell chewing gum, but they have no choice.

And they don't really want to come and live in Kabul when they've been living in the provinces. But if a United States drone is flying over your area, you're at risk even if the drone doesn't shoot a missile, because the Taliban might say, "Somebody in your compound must have given information to the United States."

And maybe it's not the Taliban. Maybe it's another armed group, another armed militia. The United States has been pouring weapons into Afghanistan and other countries have been pouring weapons in. So a tribe will say, "We're not safe here." And they'll pick up and run, and the overcrowded cities can't accommodate them.

Women and children at the Chaman e Babrak refugee camp in Afghanistan where a fire destroyed 70 homes in January 2014.

Spirit: *There have been news reports about civilian deaths caused by all the rockets, shells and grenades the U.S. has left on the ground, undetonated.*

Kelly: Recently in the *Washington Post,* Kevin Sieff wrote very movingly about how people who normally would go out and graze their animals in the fields, can't go because they might get blown up by the unexploded ordinance that the United States has dropped on the firing ranges where they're just practicing, and the shells and explosives just fall on the grounds. It's made the land unusable.

Their farming lands are not any longer usable, so the people can't plant crops, and they can't graze their sheep and their goats, so what are they going to eat? They come into the already overcrowded cities that have never been structured to accommodate them and they live in the most squalid, awful refugee camps. It just gets worse and worse there. There's even a chance of a reoccurrence of polio now. There's no way health care workers can follow nomadic refugees being bounced around from camp to camp.

Spirit: *You have charged that, while Afghan civilians live in terrible poverty, the U.S. is spending $2.1 million per year for every soldier stationed in Afghanistan, according to a 2014 report by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.*

Kelly: On this last trip, I was in a camp where fire had broken out. Mercifully, the women just kept repeating, "No one was killed, no one was killed." But all of their belongings, what little they had, were destroyed, and they're freezing out in the cold with nobody to come and help them.

Nearby, there's a U.S. military base that is huge and sprawling. You could drive for 20 minutes and not reach the end of the base. The trucks are going all day long, bringing food and fuel and water and supplies. Now, of course, you can't leave the troops hungry, but how can it be that U.S. troops are in a situation where it costs 2.1 million dollars to keep one solider in Afghanistan for one year?

Spirit: *The obvious question is why the U.S. continues to spend that amount on the military instead of trying to create a lasting peace by helping the people of Afghanistan rebuild their country.*

Kathy Kelly with Safar, an Afghan child who arrived with a red welt on his cheek.

Kelly: We could have, over all these years, said to people in Afghanistan, "We are sorry for what the soldiers did. They should never have destroyed your orchards. Let us help you plant saplings. Let us help clean your irrigation ditches. Let us help you plant crops so you won't have to import food. This is something we, as a people, want to do." We could have said, "We're sorry that your land got ruined by planting poppies for opium, and we want to help you plant other crops."

Instead, 93 percent of the world's opium is now coming from Afghanistan. You'd think that the drones flying overhead might happen to notice convoys carrying many truckloads of opium. The roads are controlled by Taliban drug lords and warlords, and even with U.S. drones flying overhead 24-7, 93 percent of the world's opium comes from Afghanistan.

[*Editor's note: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has reported that 93 percent of the world's opium comes from Afghanistan, and the money is funding Taliban military operations.*]

Spirit: *You stay with the Afghan Peace Volunteers during your trips to the region. What is the nature of their work?*

Kelly: Part of their work involves living together inter-ethnically. These are youngsters who have every reason to feel high levels of retaliation and to feel a high desire for revenge. Reasons like: "My father was killed by the Taliban." Or, "While our family fled the Taliban, your family looted our household." Or, "My brother was killed right before my eyes by members of your family."

It cuts that close. So they have been

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Youth in Afghanistan respond to the "Choose Nonviolence" campaign by ringing a bell for justice, next to a photo of Dr. King.

struggling to learn one another's languages and cultures and live together inter-ethnically, and it's difficult. They also want to say to people who live in countries — like my country — that are part of the warmaking: "We would like to be in touch with you. We want to have a dialogue with you." So they welcome us right into their homes and we live together.

They also try to channel to others whatever resources have been made available to them. So the Duvet Project has been very, very important — the making of heavy blankets by groups of women.

The women of the sewing cooperative are paid as well by the project, and that has been very important to them. This last year, they made 2,000 duvets and those are distributed free of charge to the neediest people, because these kids are like little social workers. They bring these duvets to the women who are the least cared for, who are neglected because they don't have anyone to get an income for them. Especially the young women have been brilliant in organizing this. It's been so edifying to see.

Spirit: *You've described harsh conditions facing women in Afghanistan, yet Hillary Clinton and Madeleine Albright claim that the U.S. has created better conditions for women and children there. From what you've seen, is that true?*

Kelly: One out of every 11 women in Afghanistan dies in childbirth, a torturous way to die. The lifespan for an Afghan woman is between 42 and 47 years of age, on average. And then they talk about how they're educating girls! Only six percent of Afghan young women are in a school by the end of the year. What kind of a track record is it when you can say that six percent of girls were in school by the end of the year?

The U.S. subsidized the Taliban and the U.S. exacerbated the war just by its very presence. There doesn't seem to be a limit to the availability of new recruits, both within Afghanistan and, quite likely, from Pakistan. Even General McChrystal, former head of the International Security Assistance Forces, said that the arrogance of the drone attacks jeopardizes the security of people in the U.S. because it increases the likelihood that people will fight back.

[Editor's note: General Stanley McChrystal, the former commander of International Security Assistance Forces and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, said, "What scares me about drone strikes is how they are perceived around the world. The resentment created by American use of unmanned strikes is much greater than the average American appreciates. They are hated on a visceral level, even by people who have never seen one."]

So when they want to fight back, they can join the Taliban or any of the other fighting groups. But it doesn't secure food or water or warm clothes for women and children in Afghanistan. If anything, the breadwinners are off and running and possibly coming back maimed or killed — and then there is no breadwinner.

But you can get U.S. soldiers stationed over in Kandahar, Afghanistan, having these Skype phone calls with sixth-grade girls in Baltimore, Maryland, covered by local newspapers in their Military Life sections, and these guys can make the claim that at least we've made things better for girls in Afghanistan. Well, the sixth-graders in Baltimore aren't going to be able to confront them on that. And the people in the United States who are making money because they're creating helicopters for combat brigade units flying over the mountainside with their protruding weapons killing people in cold blood — they're not going to contest that claim.

Spirit: *Who is going to contest it?*

Kelly: We try. And the Afghan Peace Volunteers are, because they get on our Skype phone calls and they put out their videos and they host internationals and they really do their best to keep on trying to put things out that the world might not otherwise understand.

Spirit: *They're finding that computer technologies are an effective way to make their voices heard around the world?*

Kelly: Yes, they are using Skype and the Internet and Facebook. I find it all kind of an annoyance, to be honest, because there's so much sports and entertainment and distractions available, but I find that on what limited Internet usage time they have, they do try to use that effectively. I guess you have to keep up.

Spirit: *Can you describe how Afghan Peace Volunteers are helping children attend classes by providing oil, rice and clothing to their families, so the kids can reduce their working hours on the street?*

Kelly: It's so heartwarming to see little boys, as proud as can be, wearing a blue shirt with a crease in it because it has just come out of a new package. It's also very heartwarming to see kids like Safar, who is shivering from the cold, wearing socks and a jacket and gloves.

It's good to see the young kids come over and get a huge can of oil and a big bag of rice for their families to make up for what the children might have earned out on the streets selling, and it's good to see them starting to learn two times two is four and starting to catch up because they all need remedial help with studies in order to be able to enter school.

So it's a whole new life of hope and dignity for the entire family, really.

Spirit: *How did the Afghan Peace Volunteers respond to the Martin Luther King Center's "Choose Nonviolence" campaign? The King Center recently asked people to ring a bell to show their resistance to poverty and discrimination.*

Kelly: Seamstresses and students and Afghan Peace Volunteers and some of the young women that were coordinating the various projects all thought together about why this call was issued. They know about Dr. King and they care about him.

So we got a lot of paper and markers and started to write down the circumstances of killing that had just gone on in the past week. It was across the board. There were Afghan policemen that had been killed, there were U.S. civilians that had been killed, there were Europeans killed, there were Taliban fighters killed and there were Afghan civilians killed. It was just a bloody, bloody week.

So they assembled that list. They didn't have a bell and it really would be too expensive to go out and buy a bell, so Zekerullah got an old paint bucket and managed to bore a hole in the lid of it, and then he suspended a piece of rope with the heaviest spoon he could find so it sort of made a "thud" rather than the peal of a bell. We formed a circle. With each clunk of the spoon in this makeshift bell, the names of those who had died were read.

Spirit: *You said that the young people you work with in Afghanistan know and care about Martin Luther King. How were they influenced by Dr. King?*

Kelly: The first time I ever got the hang of who these kids really were was in January 2010 when we were fasting in Washington, D.C., with the Witness Against Torture. Bob Cooke, who is prominent in Pax Christi, asked us if we realized that there were young people fasting with us in Afghanistan, living on a mountainside in a tent in the cold, and they wanted very much to be in touch with us.

So we all sat down to a Skype phone call and it was a wonderful call. We reached them on their cell phone. Carmen Trotta of the New York Catholic Worker asked me, "It's Martin Luther King's birthday on January 15. Do you think I should tell these kids about King?"

I said, "Yeah, go ahead." So as Carmen starts to tell these kids about Martin Luther King, there was a commotion because they had been trying to decide which one of them would deliver a memorized quote from Dr. King's speeches — by candlelight in the dark in the little tent. I thought then that I really wanted to meet these young people.

Spirit: *That's an amazing demonstration that the words and example of Martin Luther King still have such an impact on young people in Afghanistan today.*

Kelly: Well, in 2014, they now have an entire shelf of their library in their home dedicated to King, Gandhi, Noam Chomsky, Barbara Deming and Dorothy Day. They get it right away that people were taking significant risks in order to stand up to people that were abusing their basic human rights.

So they've watched videos on the civil rights movement and they've benefited from the "A Force More Powerful" videos on nonviolent social change that David Hartsough and others have sent over. They've had discussions and tried to share the knowledge that they have gained with other groups, and, of course, they're able to make the connection with the Muslim Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

So it's a very exciting time in that regard because the Skype technology allows them to connect with young people at Jeju Island [off the coast of South Korea], who are having demonstrations every morning trying to prevent construction of a U.S. military base.

Spirit: *Do you feel that the insights and strategies of nonviolent movements are being replicated all around the globe, maybe more than ever before in history?*

Kelly: It's a very interesting time because, I think, as people begin to connect and unite their various struggles, the idea of the 99 percent and the 1 percent becomes more tantalizing. As people start to see that if we only focus on our part, which is only a tiny fraction of the 99, then we aren't the 99. But if we really find ways to link ourselves, there could actually be some greatly needed change in the distribution of resources and the socioeconomic disparity.

Those who have lived under the bomb, those who have cowered while they hear the gunshots and the battles raging, when people in that situation can say, "I don't want retaliation and I don't want revenge," then we start to see nonviolence teaching the rest of us because of the courage people are catching from one another.

Spirit: *We've been told that the U.S. military plans to leave Afghanistan at the end of this year, in December 2014. Should we believe that is going to happen or do you think that the U.S. military will remain entrenched?*

Kelly: Well, I think we have to begin to learn about the 21st century military, and let go of the idea of reliance on big sprawling bases. With the kind of retooling that involves combining the drone surveillance and the Joint Special Operations commandos — these are the Navy Seals, the Green Berets, the Army Rangers and Marine commandos — then, that grouping can, with the drone surveillance, achieve the kind of control that the United States wants in order to have geopolitical influence in the region and, if they are able to accomplish it, build pipelines and railways and roadways that would function for the extraction of resources.

This would mean that the U.S. would

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then control the pricing, and control very precious resources. Underneath the Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan are lithium and rare earth elements used in our cell phones and our computers. And surrounding the Caspian Sea basin is a very rich supply of natural gas and fossil fuel.

Whoever controls the pricing and flow of those resources gets an economic edge. The United States does not want China or Russia to have that economic edge. So think about the Lawrence of Arabia stories. If somebody is trying to build a pipeline, and somebody comes out and blows it up, then that's a problem. But if you've got drone surveillance, and if you've got people giving you information about who might be moving where with a weapon or with an intent to blow up what you're trying to construct, then you can get that upper hand. And I believe the United States is remaining in Afghanistan with nine bases, three major airfields, several big prisons, interrogations, night raids, assassinations, and death squads.

They can do that with mercenaries. And the former Blackwater, now called Academi, is building a huge camp called Camp Integrity just outside of Kabul. So they won't need the big bases. Almost certainly, whoever wins the runoff in the election will sign the bilateral security agreement and there are elites from Afghanistan, Europe and the United States who will benefit handsomely, and the warlike situation will go on. It's preposterous to think that the warlords and the drug lords are saying, "We're done with our control over Afghanistan's resources and people.

Spirit: *When you go to Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, why is it important for you to live with people in the war zones?*

Kelly: The truism we've been taught is that where you stand determines what you see. I could point specifically to Gaza. I was there in 2009 during Operation Cast Lead. *[Editor's note: Operation Cast Lead was a three-week battle between Israeli and Palestinian forces in the Gaza Strip from Dec. 27, 2008, to Jan. 18, 2009.]*

A bomb was exploding once every 11 minutes, from 11:00 at night to 1:00 in the morning and again from 3:00 until 6:00. Once every 11 minutes, a big explosion.

Now, I know nothing about ballistics. Zero. But I started to recognize when it was a Hellfire missile fired from an Apache helicopter or when it was a 500-pound bomb dropped from an F-16. The way I learned that was because the children taught it to me. Children — they weren't even teenagers yet — taught me how to identify the bombs falling over our heads.

Then, after the ceasefire was declared, I was in the hospital with a doctor whose hands are shaking while he's taking a call from a farmer who is saying, "Our oranges are covered with some white, sticky substance, and we don't know what it is, but it makes our hands itch."

The doctor is trying to calmly tell him, "Don't touch those oranges again. Wash your hands. And don't sell the oranges."

Then he takes me to visit a woman whose arms are bandaged up, and she has actually been hit by a tank-fired missile that was firing white phosphorous into her home. It was so nightmarish I didn't quite believe it, but I asked a taxi driver to take me to her home and I could see the horrific damage. I got my notes to someone at the *L.A. Times* and they wrote a brilliant article on their front page.

The Chaman e Babrak refugee camp was destroyed by fire. People endure danger, hardships and destitution in these camps.

So it is important to go and try to learn what you can. The disproportionate use of force against the civilian population is a war crime, a crime against humanity, and I think it should be reported.

Spirit: *You helped organize delegations that brought medicine to civilians in Iraq as a way of nonviolently resisting U.S. economic sanctions. How did you become involved in organizing that campaign in defiance of the sanctions?*

Kelly: George Lakey was doing a peace training in Chicago in 1995 at Christmas time. Most of us at that training had been to Iraq in 1991 as part of a Gulf Peace Team. So we knew a lot, compared to most Americans. We also knew that Sister Anne Montgomery and Sister Eileen Storey and Jim Douglass had been going over to Iraq and coming back and saying that it was really bad over there. They were telling people about the consequences of the economic sanctions.

I'm not proud of this at all, but sometimes Sister Anne or Sister Eileen would call me and I would be afraid to answer the phone because I knew they were going to tell me about Iraq when I was taking care of my aging Dad and I was supposed to be a part of these actions about nuclear disarmament. And I'm not keeping my head above water about anything, so how could I take on more?

At this time, we also had the George Lakey workshop asking us to record ourselves talking about what we would do if we took action about a serious problem in the world. So Anne Montgomery and I and a few others took on the issue of the sanctions against Iraq.

On January 15, 1996, 12 of us wrote to the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Treasury Department saying our plan was to break the economic sanctions as often as we could, and that we would do this openly and publicly, and that we would bring medicine and medical relief supplies to Iraq. By that time, we had 300 additional signers.

Boy, we got a letter back right away from the Office of Foreign Assets Control saying, "You keep this up, and you will risk 12 years in prison, a million-dollar fine, and a $250,000 administrative penalty."

So then, we sent that letter out to our 300 signers and asked them to let us know if they were still on board, and 80 people were still on board. So those 80 people were the beginning, really, of Voices in the Wilderness. We gave ourselves that name, and we opened a bank account.

In March 1996, the first five-member Voices in the Wilderness delegation traveled to Iraq. We stuffed in our duffel bags whatever medicine, antibiotics, vitamins and medical relief supplies that people would donate to us.

Spirit: *Since you had told the U.S. government in advance that you were going to take medicine to Iraq, did they try to prevent you from going?*

Kelly: No. We went to Jordan by plane and nobody's going to stop you from going to Jordan because you're not violating any laws. We held a press conference before we left every time we went and we held a press conference when we came back. We were always open and public. They can't stop you from going to Jordan. Then we traveled by vehicle to Iraq.

At that time, it was always a very, very difficult kind of interaction. We didn't want to be at all subservient to the aims of a cruel and brutal dictatorship. But at the same time, we couldn't walk away from the bedsides of dying children, and say, "Well, it's really too complicated. We can't do anything." So we did our best. If you wait until you're perfect, you'll wait a very long time. It was always a campaign with an inherent flaw.

Spirit: *The stated purpose of the economic sanctions against Iraq was to weaken Saddam Hussein's hold on power. Since you refer to Hussein as a cruel and brutal dictator, why were you acting in resistance to the sanctions?*

Kelly: We could see clearly that the sanctions actually *strengthened* the government of Saddam Hussein. That was true. If you want to isolate a cruel and abusive dictator, then strengthen the country's social services, strengthen its education, and strengthen the possibility of civil society staying in touch with people outside the country. But the sanctions isolated civil society, ended education for all practical purposes, and cut off any kind of social services so that people became more dependent on the cruel and brutal dictator.

So we could see all that. We didn't come out and say publicly, "Saddam Hussein is a cruel and brutal dictator." We would never have been allowed into the country and anybody that helped us would have been killed.

Spirit: *Did the U.S. government ever press charges against Voices in the Wilderness for violating the sanctions?*

Kelly: They would bring us into court with some regularity. It was curious because at one point there was a $50,000 fine. I thought, "What are you going to take — my contact lenses?" I just had to laugh. I mean, I haven't paid a dime of taxes to the U.S. government as a war tax refuser since 1980. So there is nothing they could take from me. The people that would go over were in the same boat. So good luck collecting from them!

Spirit: *But as it turned out, they did fine your group $20,000, didn't they?*

Kelly: Yeah, they finally took us into court. And I think Condoleezza Rice inadvertently might have saved us. This is speculation on my part, but this much is true. Chevron settled out of court, acknowledging that they had paid money under the table to Saddam Hussein in order to get very lucrative contracts for Iraqi oil. Condoleezza Rice was the international liaison for Chevron while it was paying money under the table to get these lucrative contracts. So when we finally had our day in court, Sen. Carl Levin's staffers were still digging up this information and it was beginning to become public evidence that Chevron, Odin Marine Inc., Mobil and Coastal Oil had all been paying money for these oil contracts under the table to Saddam Hussein.

So there were big fish in the pond that broke the sanctions and there were little fish in the pond that broke the sanctions. I think some of the big fish said, "That is one hot potato. You drop that hot potato as fast as you can, and don't make a big deal because those people are little fish but they're mouthy little fish."

So they never tried to collect a dime from us. The money was sitting there.

Spirit: *Well, what exactly did happen to you when the U.S. government took you to court for violating the sanctions?*

Kelly: We were found guilty and fined $20,000. Federal Judge John Bates wrote in his legal opinion that those who disobey an unjust law should accept the penalty willingly and lovingly.

Spirit: *Unbelievable! A federal judge lectures you about lovingly accepting this unjust fine using the words of Martin Luther King?*

Kelly: Yes. We said to Judge Bates, "If you want to send us to prison, we will go, willingly and lovingly. We've done that before already. But if you think we will pay a fine to the U.S. government, then we ask you to imagine that Martin Luther King would have ever said, 'Coretta get the checkbook.' We are not going to pay one dime to the U.S. government which continues to wage warfare."

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At that time, supplemental spending bills appeared every year, sometimes two or three times a year, and congressional representatives and senators continued to vote yes on those spending bills for the military. So we said, "No, we won't pay a dime of that fine."

Spirit: *Why did you change your name from Voices in the Wilderness to Voices for Creative Nonviolence?*

Kelly: We were Voices in the Wilderness and we had not ended the economic sanctions. That was the greatest disappointment of my adult life. We tried hard but we didn't succeed. So we began to question continuing to use the name of a campaign that didn't succeed.

Voices in the Wilderness was a campaign to end military and economic warfare against Iraq. We had begun doing other work for peace in other countries, and we started to think that maybe we should think about a name change.

Spirit: *A name that would reflect your broader focus?*

Kelly: Yes, there was a lot of discussion of a lot of factors and we came up with a new name: Voices for Creative Nonviolence. And people decided to go ahead with it.

Spirit: *Now, many years later, there is also a Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK and they say they were inspired by your example.*

Kelly: Maya Evans has been a good friend for many years. She came as an 18-year-old intern to work with us one summer. She and I have lived every December for the past three years with the Afghan Peace Volunteers. They're a wonderful group. There are wonderful activists over in England.

Spirit: *How does it feel to know that you helped plant the seeds that inspired peace work in England?*

Kelly: It's all mutual. It was nice of Maya to say that we encouraged them, but it's all mutual.

Spirit: *Long before you ever formed Voices for Creative Nonviolence, you did a creative nonviolent action in 1988 when you were arrested for planting corn at a U.S. nuclear missile silo, as a symbol of converting swords into plowshares.*

Kelly: Well, 150 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles [Minuteman ICBMs] surrounded Kansas City and there were 1,000 buried in the Midwest, the heartland where grains are grown. A number of people from Milwaukee, Madison, Chicago and Kansas City got together over the course of a year, very much guided by a very talented facilitator, Brother Bob Bossie and his brother Paul.

We felt that we couldn't any longer watch what was happening to Plowshares activists who would get very long prison sentences, and not try to take some accompanying action, so we decided to try planting corn at the missile silos.

Spirit: *It was a great symbol. The earth can be used to plant corn to feed people or plant missiles to threaten massive death.*

Kelly: It was a great symbol. And as soon as they let us go, we'd go right back out and do it again.

Spirit: *Would you climb over the fences surrounding the missile silos and then wait for arrest?*

Kelly: Sometimes we'd go over the fences and sometimes we'd pick a lock for elderly people who couldn't make it over. We would always tell the media, "Meet us at Hardee's restaurant and we'll tell you where to go next." But we always told Whiteman Air Force Base that we're definitely going to keep doing actions.

We'd go into the silos and wait for arrest. We'd sing songs and say to the soldiers, "We're not going to cooperate with this arrest, but we certainly mean you no harm." They were very polite and they'd handcuff us and haul us into the vehicle.

One time after an arrest, I was left by myself in handcuffs with one young soldier in a jeep. I don't last very long in silence. So I asked him, "Do you think the corn will grow?" And he said, "I don't know, ma'am, but I sure hope so."

Spirit: *Did you get much jail time for these actions?*

Kelly: I was sentenced to one year in prison but I only served nine months of it in a maximum-security prison in Lexington, Kentucky.

Spirit: *Nine months is a long time to spend in a prison.*

Kelly: It was very educational. I was able to learn Spanish. And it suddenly changed the way I would ever be a teacher. I could never walk into a classroom and say, "I'm the teacher and you're the students and I hold authority over you like I'm the warden or something."

It took the warden out of me. And it gave me more backbone than I'd had before.

Spirit: *Why did it give you more backbone?*

Kelly: I think because I felt at times, "I've got nothing to lose. I'll stand up to this warden. What is she going to do, shoot me?"

I found myself standing up to authority figures and raising my voice. What are they going to do? I'm already in prison. If they put me in solitary confinement, I'll be happy. I thought that if I can't make phone calls or can't have visitors, or can't have a pen and a pencil, I'll read books.

Spirit: *You didn't miss your freedom and your life outside the prison?*

Kelly: No, not really. It's all a matter of your attitude. If you go in saying, "I've got nine months ahead of me so I'm going to learn as much as I can, and forget about the outside world." It's true that during mail call, your heart can jump sometimes. No matter how hard you try to say, "I'm here where I am," there's always the pull of the outside world.

But what I learned from the other women, I could never, never have learned if I had been a chaplain or a social worker inside the jail. What you learn when you're sitting on the bench next to someone who has a jail number just like you have a number is very, very important, and it helped shape my views for a long time.

Spirit: *Could you explain a little about what you learned in prison?*

Kelly: Well, I learned that the prison was a world of imprisoned beauty. I was meeting people who could have been my sisters-in-law, my next-door neighbors, my colleagues. I learned that there is no mercy and that people get these lengthy, lengthy sentences and they're cut off from their families.

The main people that threaten us are in the corporation offices and in the well-appointed salons at parties, and they *really* threaten us. They make weapons. They make alcohol, firearms and tobacco, and arms for the military. They steal from us, and they rob us. And who goes to jail? A woman who can't get an economic stake in her community unless she agrees to be the lookout for a two-bit drug transaction. And maybe her life is so out of control that she starts to take some drugs. But the remorse and the desire to make a better world for their children are so palpable.

So you have this world of imprisoned beauty and it is almost as though it's erased from the mindset of the rest of the country. And what I learned to my great shame is that I forgot too, when I left. I started to forget about the women. You drive past that prison, and *you know*. But the urgency starts to wear down.

Kathy Kelly with children who come for tutoring with the Afghan Peace Volunteers.

Spirit: *When I went to jail the first time, I wished that the judge would be sentenced to serve time in his own jail and the media would report on the conditions so the average person would find out what hellholes exist in their quiet little towns. But it's all out of sight and out of mind, and people don't see the suffering.*

Kelly: George Fox, the Quaker, would challenge the political authorities and the people who were running religious services. He thought they were contrary to the teachings of love your enemies, and love your neighbor, and care for the poor. So George Fox would stand on the bench in the court, and he would challenge it, and he'd start screaming and writhing. That's why they called them Quakers.

I thought that, one of these days, I want to get on the bench inside a courtroom and raise my voice like George Fox, and say, "Could we look at what color the people are that are making money off of this prison every day? And what color the people are that are going to jail? God, could you help us understand this?"

Spirit: *In 2004, you were arrested for trespassing at Fort Benning at what used to be called the School of the Americas, but activists called it the School of Assassins. What is it called now?*

Kelly: The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Spirit: *An innocuous name for an "Institute" that trained death squads and torturers. Why led you to trespass at this Army training base?*

Kelly: Graduates of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security have been indicted and convicted of death-squad massacres and assassinations, including assassinations of figures we've known including Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, the six Jesuit priests whose brains were blown out, and four missionaries, including three religious women who were tortured, raped and buried in a shallow grave.

These killings were a way of saying to people all across Central and South America: "If you mess with us, look at what we'll do to your Archbishop. Look what we'll do to your women missionaries. Look what we'll do to your Jesuit priests. You think you have a chance?"

The rivers were running red with blood from the various massacres that have been carried out by the people who have graduated from this school. And that just begins to touch the surface of all the ways that the U.S. military and State Department have said to people in Central America: "You are to subordinate yourselves to serve our national interests or we will torture you and eliminate you."

We can't look the other way!

Spirit: *Recently, you've acted in resistance to drone warfare in Nevada, New York State and Whiteman AFB in Missouri. Why has it become so important for you to protest drone warfare?*

Kelly: It's important because the 21st century military is morphing and changing. I think the combination of using drone surveillance, drone attacks, and having advanced special operations commandos in place allows the United States to get the upper hand in critical areas that the U.S. wants to continue controlling. It means that they're not going to try to emphasize negotiations and diplomacy. They're not going to try to use words. And they're going to keep pouring money into military solutions and not put that money into what we really need.

So the drones are a means of gathering so-called intelligence. But, the drones are not sending the intelligence we really need, because the drones will never tell you what it's like to be a widow in Afghanistan trying to make your way up that mountainside carrying water. The drones will never tell you what it's like to be a mother carrying a bundle that is the dead body of your starved child.

The drones have no way to tell us that. They just give us this cartoonish notion of those bad boys. And somehow, the bad guys, the high-value targets, are surmised to be people that might pose a threat, but there aren't any questions asked.

The mother of a son killed in Iraq said to me, "They do not ask 'Who is this? Who is that?'" She knew you're at least supposed to ask questions before bombing people. She said, "They killed my son, and now I am an old poor woman. Who will bring bread into this house?"

Spirit: *Can you describe the protest against drone warfare at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in DeWitt, New York, in April 2011?*

Kelly: I went out to Hancock Field and met with a wonderful group of people — so active, so much singing, so much camaraderie and good will. They'd already done long marches and they had done their homework. We walked from a park to Hancock Field and we crossed the line and laid down as part of a die-in.

People put white sheets and roses on those that were lying down. Then we were arrested and taken to the DeWitt County Jail. The arrests at these actions have now caused the entire DeWitt County jail and court system to say that this has got to stop because it's costing a great deal of money.

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It so rattled the military people that the commander of the Air National Guard Base has taken out an order of protection saying that he is at risk — if any of these protesters come anywhere near the base, it's a personal threat to his safety.

So Cynthia Banas, who is 79 years old, said, "But I don't even know what he looks like!" [prolonged laughter]

Spirit: *Voices for Creative Nonviolence organized the Occupation Protest in 2007. Activists from 25 states were arrested for occupying congressional offices. Why did you take the protest to Washington, D.C.?*

Kelly: We were very respectful of the many vigils that people engaged in across the country to protest congressional funding of the war in Iraq. But we thought, what if we take those vigils right inside the congressional offices and said, "We're not going to leave until you assure us that you're not going to continue to exacerbate the war in Iraq, and put your boss on the phone with us."

So people across the country did that and it was a very, very good thing. The U.S. Constitution says that Congress shall make no law to abridge the right of people to assemble peacefully for a redress of grievances. So we assembled peacefully for a redress of grievances *inside* the place where the grievance is being perpetuated.

There were many arrests, and of those who changed their votes in the U.S. Congress and Senate, every single one of them was from a place where these nonviolent activists had peacefully assembled. It was a good experiment.

Spirit: *You have also been a war tax resister for a long time.*

Kelly: I'm a war tax *refuser*. I don't give them anything.

Spirit: *Oh, you're not a 50 percent withholder, like many war tax resisters. You're a 100 percent withholder?*

Kelly: Yes, I'm a 100 percent withholder. I think war tax resistance is important but I happen to be a refuser. They haven't got one dime of federal income tax from me since 1980.

Spirit: *Why did you begin refusing to pay federal taxes entirely?*

Kelly: I won't give them any money. I can't and I won't. I won't pay for guns. I don't believe in killing people. I also don't want to pay for the CIA, the FBI, the corporate bail-outs or the prison system. But particularly, I began as a war tax refuser. I wouldn't give money to the Mafia if they came to my door and said, "We'd like you to help pay for our operations." I'm certainly not going to pay for wars when I've tried throughout my adult life to educate people to resist nonviolently.

Spirit: *How have you gotten away with not paying federal taxes since 1980? Do you keep your income low?*

Kelly: Many years I have lived below the taxable income. But in 1998, someone from the IRS came to my home. I had in some years claimed extra allowances on the W-4 form. And I just don't file. I haven't filed since 1980. Now, that's a criminal offense and they could put me in jail for a long time for that.

If I was earning over the taxable income, I would just calculate how many allowances I have to claim so that no money is taken out of my paycheck. It says in the small print on the W-2 form to put down the correct number of allowances so that the correct amount of tax is taken out. Well, that's easy. The correct amount of tax to take from me is zero, so I just do the math.

Spirit: *Why do you think they haven't come after you?*

Kelly: Well, they have come to collect taxes. But I don't have a savings account, and I don't own anything. The IRS is like my spiritual director [laughs]. I don't know how to drive a car, and I've never owned any place that I've lived in. I just don't have anything to take.

Spirit: *So has the IRS given up on even trying to collect?*

Kelly: Once they came out to collect in 1998 when I was taking care of my dear Dad, who was wheelchair-bound, and a bit slumped over in the chair. Dad liked to listen to opera and I had a really awful old record player playing a scratchy record.

I had been in the back of the house and I didn't know she was coming, so I ran down to answer the door while the record player was making such a horrible noise. The apartment was fine but it only had a few sticks of furniture.

The woman asked me if I was going to get a job, and I told her I couldn't leave my father. Then she asked if I had a bank account, and I said no. She said, "And you don't own a car?" And I told her I didn't even know how to drive. Then she just kind of leaned toward me and said, "You know what? I'm just going to write you up as uncollectable." And I said, "That's a very good idea." [laughs] They've never tried to collect since. There was just nothing to take! Zero. Nothing.

Spirit: *You were the keynote speaker on Good Friday at Livermore Laboratory this year. Why was it important for you to join in resisting Livermore Lab's role in escalating the nuclear arms race?*

Kelly: I greatly admire the people who have never swerved from drawing attention to Livermore Lab. They have given unstintingly of their time, and many are part of a faith-based perspective.

I think that we crucify the poorest and neediest among us on the cross of military spending. We care more about our bombs and our bullets and our capacity to have more nuclear weapons than anybody else. We care more about that than we care about people's ability to have housing and food and education. We will pursue our attacks against enemies, even though we say we're a Christian nation, and that's the dominant religion.

But I think the real religion in this country is shopping, and the ability to keep acquiring goods at cut-rate prices. One of the ways we can do that is by aiming our nuclear weapons at other countries and saying, "Look what we've got. You think you can stand up to us. You think we won't use our weapons against you."

We have a right, and a responsibility, to claim our right not to kill. So I go to Livermore to study the scriptures, and listen to the hymns, and be in solidarity with people who claim their right not to kill.

Spirit: *Some see nonviolence as a political tactic or strategy, while others see it as a way of life. What does nonviolence mean to you?*

Kelly: I think it means every day, trying to do your best to live more simply, to share the earth's resources, to find ways to be of service rather than to be part of dominance, and always to either be in support of, or active with, campaigns of nonviolent resistance to evil and injustice. Sometimes it means going to court and jail, sometimes it entails going into a war zone. But there are many, many ways to engage in nonviolent direct action.

Spirit: *You've been involved in delivering medical supplies to Iraq, planting corn on a nuclear missile silo, doing war tax resistance, caring for your ailing father, and living in war zones in the Middle East. How did your understanding of nonviolence lead you to be involved in these very diverse kinds of actions?*

> **"I won't give them any money. I can't and I won't. I won't pay for guns. I don't believe in killing people. I also don't want to pay for the CIA, the FBI, the corporate bail-outs or the prison system."**
>
> — Kathy Kelly, describing why she is a war tax refuser

Kelly: I think the first question we must ask is something Gandhi pointed us to: How does our action affect the most impoverished person in the world? If that is our rudder or guideline, it becomes much easier to make decisions about how to act in solidarity.

Spirit: *I agree that Gandhi's question about how our actions affect the poorest person is the very heart of it all. How did it guide your decisions in taking stands?*

Kelly: If you're wondering what you're going to do, and you're asking about people who are hungry and cold or at risk of being tortured, imprisoned, bombed, marginalized, then it will really affect how you decide to act and use whatever resources you may have. That is so important. Also, to whatever extent we can choose service over dominance — especially coming from the privileged place that we come from — this can help us nonviolently interact with our world.

And we need to have, as sort of the spiritual tone of our movement, a delight in not letting inconvenience get in the way of acting in accord with our deepest beliefs. I think most people deeply believe that killing is wrong. And most people deeply believe in caring for children, including their own grandchildren.

So how can we make sure that inconvenience won't get in the way of acting in accord with our deepest beliefs? If people deeply believe in caring for their grandchildren, and they'd like their grandchildren to have a planet to inhabit, they may be inconvenienced as a grandma or grandpa being involved in peace movement activism. It might even take away from some of the time they can be with their grandchildren. But it makes sense in that longer vision of creating a better world.

Spirit: *In looking back now at a lifetime of activism, who were your inspirations? Who helped get you involved in working for peace and justice?*

Kelly: Karl Meyer was certainly crucial for me as a mentor. He was the love of my life who I married. We were married from 1982 to 1994, but we are still very close. Karl was someone who would put his life in line with his deepest beliefs and unhesitatingly practice what he believed in. He radicalized a whole generation of us in his small neighborhood in Chicago and also had a more widespread influence on activists.

Spirit: *Who else was an inspiration or formative influence?*

Kelly: All the Catholic Workers that I've been privileged to be close to have made a big difference in my life. The Catholic Workers are willing to find gentle ways to live simply, to share their resources and to work very hard to embrace the teachings of peace and justice.

I've been very fortunate to know people for many years, from the Gulf Peace Team and up to the present, who have been part of peace team experiments. David Hartsough has certainly been a lifelong exemplar of experimenting with the possibilities of developing nonviolent peace teams.

I've also been very impressed by the women I've met in prison because they're facing the remainder of the long days and years of imprisonment. And even though they're isolated and have a stigma that they're coping with, many of them, they have a kind of courage that I'm not sure I have. They've shown that to me.

I have great thanks for Amy Goodman. She is like a national heroine to me because she has never stopped trying to educate the U.S. public and she has done it in a way that has been very life-giving for movements all around the world.

I am quite grateful for the medical doctor who is the mentor for the Afghan Peace Volunteers. We call him by the name that was given to him by villagers in Afghanistan — Hakim. He has certainly practiced Gandhian nonviolence by living simply under Spartan circumstances, and he has a belief that nonviolence can change the world. He has been dedicated and rugged in upholding that.

Spirit: *Are there any books on nonviolence that have impressed you lately?*

Kelly: I'm very, very impressed by *The Lizard Cage* by Karen Connolly, a novel about circumstances inside a prison in Myanmar (formerly Burma). I just finished Moshin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* and *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh. I've been reading Amitav Ghosh all my life.

Spirit: *What about books that were formative when you first began your work for peace and justice?*

Kellly: David Dellinger's *From Yale to Jail: The Life Story of a Moral Dissenter*. That was one of the most important books I've ever read because he told about his personal life without dodging some of the questions that are bound to rise up in a person's life choices if you want to make a commitment to nonviolence and activism.

Spirit: *You attended the Chicago Theological Seminary. How important are your spiritual values in guiding this work for peace and justice?*

Kelly: I like Thomas Paine's line: "My country is the world. My religion is to do good." And I'm very grateful for the two extra years to grow up that I had in keeping myself out of commission by being a student at the Chicago Theological Seminary. I was very grateful for the excellent scripture scholars at the Jesuit School of Theology.

But probably the best thing was that I finally started to realize that I talk a great line about the preferential option for the poor. But I'm in Hyde Park in Chicago and I'm not seeing any poor people.

So I finally said that to a very close friend of mine, a professor. As he walked away from me, he said over his shoulder, "Kathleen, why don't you go to that soup kitchen on the north side?"

And I said, "Oh, why don't I?" So I did. And that made a huge difference.

Spirit: *How would you characterize the relationship between spirituality and political engagement in your life?*

Kelly: I do think falling in love helps. It's what sustains you for the long haul. There are many different ways of falling in love. I've fallen in love with the Afghan Peace Volunteers, and before that I fell in love with a group of Iraqi children. I fall in love easily and I think that's really important for the long haul.

I think we can become kindred spirits with people who have made altruistic choices and who have learned to make those choices very attractive and very valuable. You can have a passion and believe it, and then find ways to put your life in line with it. It's really a huge gift.

Good Samaritan at Work in Berkeley

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brings them back for signatures, supplies envelopes and postage, and walks each client to the mailbox. If someone's in prison, rehab or a psych ward, he holds onto their mail until they return. He freely gives out his cell number. On the first of each month, he routinely receives over 100 phone calls inquiring about checks.

Before he began volunteering with the Catholic Worker full-time, JC studied in Greece, studied computer programming, raced motorcycles down "The Snake" on the Mulholland Highway in Southern California, collected coins, and worked at a lumber yard in Millbrae.

He held this last job until he wasn't rehired after serving time in prison in 2003. JC was arrested when he protested at Fort Benning in Georgia.

The annual School of the Americas vigil, attended by over 10,000 Catholics, honors the six Jesuit priests who were killed by Latin American commandos trained at the U.S. base. JC said that, after hearing the peace activist Fr. John Dear speak, he felt compelled to join the nonviolent demonstration.

"It was as a direct action of civil disobedience showing our opposition to the U.S. government teaching torture," JC said. He was cited with trespassing onto a U.S. military base along with 84 other marchers. He was fined $1,000 and served 90 days in federal prison.

In addition to protesting against violence, weapons and war, JC advocates on behalf of those without medical coverage. He's been in their shoes as an uninsured patient seeking surgery for skin cancer at Highland Hospital.

A homeless man, who asked not to be identified, outside the Canterbury House on Bancroft Way said, "If it wasn't for JC, I wouldn't be alive today." A man named Lawrence said he calls JC a friend who "goes above and beyond the call of duty."

JC himself barely scrapes by. He took out a home equity loan on his house and relies on the generosity of friends to keep Night on the Streets operating on less than $30,000 per year. His only income besides Social Security is $6,000 a year from the city of Berkeley for running the shelter, and $750 a month from the American Friends Service Committee for coordinating the distribution of 20,000 copies per month of the homeless newspaper *Street Spirit* to vendors in the East Bay.

At a Presidents Day meal in February, JC said a prayer: "We need to treat the homeless as human, as our brothers, as children of God. We need to see that spark of divinity within each and everyone we meet. We need to see the living Christ in the soup line. Only then can we be radically transformed by love and kindness."

GIMME SHELTER

When it rains in Berkeley, JC and the Catholic Worker go into high gear. JC runs the Emergency Storm Shelter, which opens up for 65 homeless people on especially cold and wet nights between Thanksgiving and Easter. If rain is forecasted that evening, he creates a flier on his computer titled "Gimme Shelter!" (a reference to The Rolling Stones song) and sends an email to 140 addresses, including the Berkeley Fire Department, Highland Hospital, John George Psychiatric Hospital, and many social service organizations throughout Alameda County. He drives around Berkeley posting the flier at shelters and parks.

He arrives at the shelter at Durant Avenue and Dana Street around 8:30 p.m. and hands out printed tickets numbering 1-65. These tickets guarantee a bed for the night inside the First Congregational Church. JC tells people to find a place to take cover from the rain and return at 9:45 to be admitted at 10. On nights when the church hall is being used for a concert, the shelter is closed.

JC said that, since the City of Berkeley increased the number of beds from 50 to 65 this year, he's only had to turn away five people total in 25 nights. Looking at the stats, he said that nearly 15 percent of the shelter occupants are veterans, and the population is aging. There's been an increase in the number of people over 55 in the shelter.

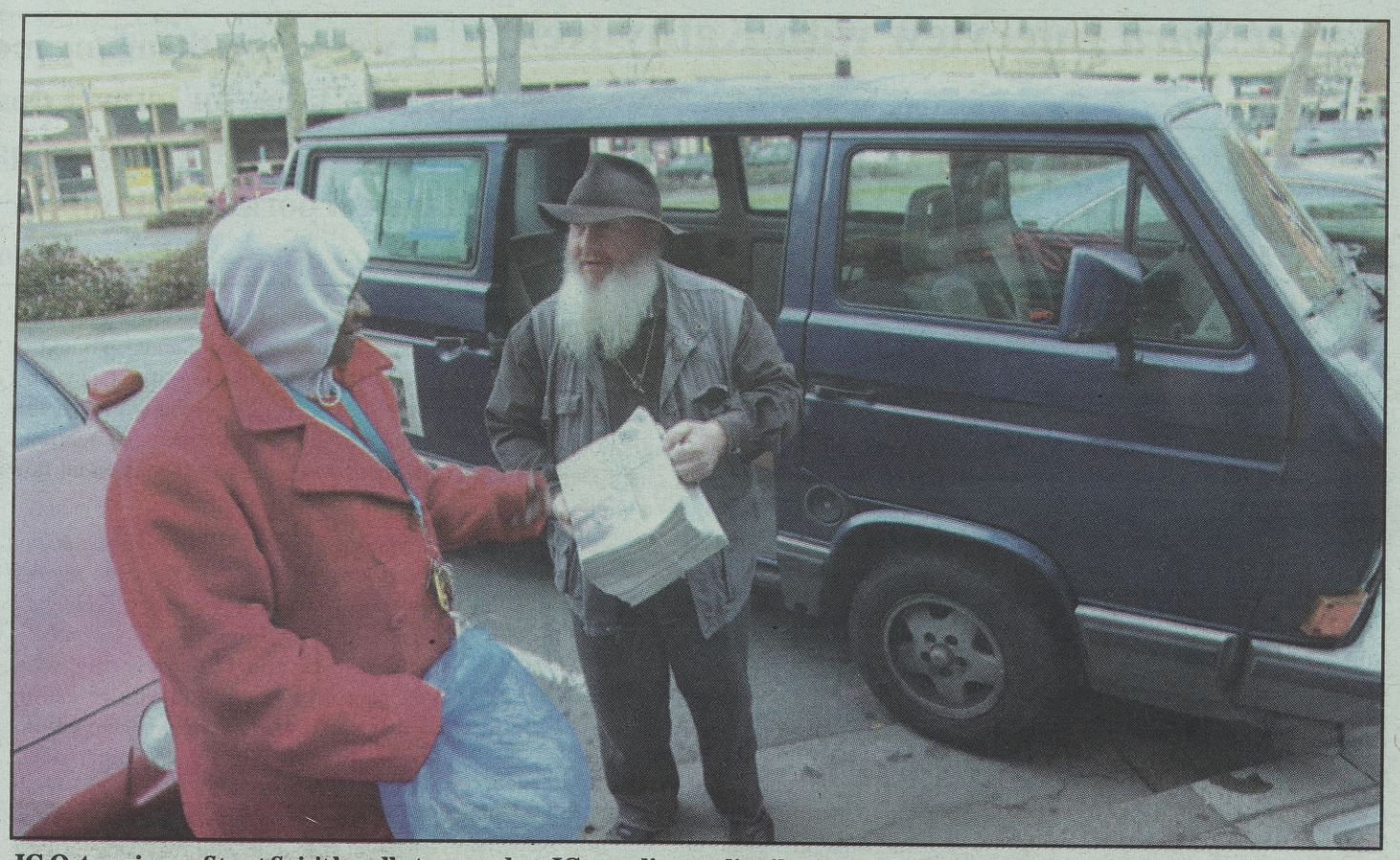
Roberto, who frequently stays at the shelter with his wife, Alicia, said of JC, "He does a lot for us. He does it all. He's really good at helping homeless people out."

Some nights the homeless patrons will ask JC to say "the prayer" before bed. JC Orton will stand up and give a traditional Irish blessing: "May the Lord support you all the day long, 'til the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and the day's work is done. Then in His mercy may He give you a safe lodging, a holy rest and peace."

JC walks laps around the space, gradually turning the lights down. He makes sure people are settling in and turns the lights completely off at 11. He bids goodnight to the shelter workers and heads back home.

Why do the volunteers keep coming back? Hahn says JC Orton inspires and challenges him. Zyg figures that, since he has enough to get by and others don't, he's compelled to give back. For Brando, "It's a state of mind. These people aren't things to step over when going to the movies, but they are human beings and deserve to be cared for."

Matt Werner, 30, has been a volunteer with the Catholic Worker for 10 years. Visit its website to learn more about Night on the Streets Catholic Worker. This article was first published on April 24 on Berkeleyside, Berkeley's independent news site.



JC Orton gives a *Street Spirit* bundle to a vendor. JC coordinates distribution of the paper to 150 vendors. Matt Werner photo

"Sometimes that bowl of soup is all these folks get that night. A gentleman may be cold and on the ground, but this shows him that he's human, that he's cared for. It makes a world of difference." — Brando Gutierrez, Night on the Streets Catholic Worker

Volunteers from Night on the Streets Catholic Worker serve food to homeless people in Berkeley. Matt Werner photo

Remembering a Vet on the Street

by George Wynn

A tall man
who handed
out coffee
sandwiches
and a smile
on the street
and never
spoke of
war only
to say
war is stupidity
run by men
all of them
incapable
of telling
the truth

Lydia Gans photo